"TOMORROW"

BY CARL WALTER.

RALPH HURLBUT leaned back in unaccustomed idleness and let the canoe float down stream. The sense of having nothing to do, nothing to worry about, on this glorious June morning, filled him with a dreamy content.

He was on the first vacation he had taken since college days. The last few years had been strenuous ones; mind and body had been worked hard. His wonderful success had come as the result of grinding toil. But now youth demanded rest and the pleasures that are its right.

"But I'll have my good time now," he declared to himself, his eyes on the cool rippling water ahead of the little boat. "And the romance, too, perhaps," he added, with a smile.

As he looked far down the willow-arched stream where the morning sun shone through the trees and touched it to brightness a whimsical thought came into his mind.

"When I turn that bend down there something will happen. I shall have an adventure. Fate is waiting for me just beyond that bend."

He laughed at himself, but the idea got firm hold on his mind. He was in a mood for such fancies, not that the long strain on every faculty had relaxed. This was his wonderful vacation.

"Who knows?" he cried gayly, and took up the paddle. "I'll soon find out. At any rate."

His imagination pictured a dozen adventures, but one image persisted, and at last drove the others away. Ralph's youth was asserting itself. He hoped he might find Her sitting on the bank or walking beneath the willows, a dream girl with the gray eyes and the sweet mouth of the woman he could love.

As he neared the turn in the stream his odd imagining became almost real to him. He could even see the gown she would wear, blue, soft, with perhaps some white fluffy stuff on it like clouds on a June sky.

A few more vigorous strokes and the canoe swung dizzily around the curve and glided into the unknown part of the stream. The trees were fewer here. There were flowers near the banks. No one was in sight. All was peaceful and deserted. A deep disappointment came over him, a feeling stronger than the cause seemed to warrant. He tried to laugh it off. "Here I am mooning like an idiot!" he exclaimed disgustedly. "I imagine a thing and then complain because it is not real." But the disappointment and the eager longing persisted.

He steadied the canoe and looked around once more. A white patch on the left bank attracted his attention. He could not see what it was, and idly paddled to the shore.

It was a little white silk glove, long and small in his hand, the fingers still curled naturally as if rosy living fingers were within them. He smoothed it out on his palm. The tips were soiled a trifle. Evidently the wearer had been picking owers near the water's edge.

"I'll find the owner for you, little glove," he said, putting it into his pocket.

Far up a white road, to the left, he caught side of a moving patch of blue—a blue dress, a white hat! Immediately he ran up the bank and started along the road.

He stopped with a jerk. "Well, Ralph Furibut, you idiot," he sneered. "This vacation has turned your brain." Certainly he was not acting like the practical business man he had been only yesterday.

He took a dozen steps in the direction of his canoe. Then he turned and started down the white road. "Oh, well, I'd better return the glove to her, anyway," he decided, a little shamefaced. He walked rapidly, his eyes on the patch of blue.

Before he could reach her the wearer of the blue dress turned into a narrow path leading to the only house in sight. When Ralph arrived at the path he could see her knocking at a side door. Her back was turned to him as she pounded vigorously.

"I'VE ARRANGED WITH MRS. THURSTON TO COME HERE TO BOARD."

The blue dress evidently had a determined owner. Ralph thought she would never cease knocking.

He had his first misgiving when she shook the door. Finally, when she began to kick strenuously at the panels, he began to see that Fate had, perhaps, been misleading him.

At this moment the woman made up her mind that no one was at home. She turned away and came down the path toward Ralph, walking with impatient strides. A basket hung on her arm.

She looked about 50 years old, extremely gaunt and remarkably bad-tempered. One glance, and the fact that he had followed this person in a romantic mood, carrying her gloves over his heart, moved Ralph to a fit laughter. While she walked toward him, staring angrily, he rocked to and fro in paroxysms of mirth.

The woman came almost up to him and was about to say something in no gentle tone—to judge by her expression—when she suddenly tripped on a stone and, catching at Ralph support, let her heavy basket fall on his feet. His coat was torn with a long rending sound and the woman sat down heavily in a crumpled heap. The cream in a glass bottle in the basket splashed lightly over Ralph and eggs covered his shoes with a yellow coating.

As he noted each new phase of the catastrophe he burst into another roar of laughter. His companion sat in the road and regarded him stonily. Finally Ralph saw that her face was growing very pale, and at the idea that she might really be heart his laughter subsided.

He gently tried to help her up. She struck at him awkwardly, her eyes flashing, but said nothing. Ralph was really alarmed, for by this time her face was very white.

"Are you hurt, madam?" he asked anxiously.

No answer. He began to talk, hoping that she would break her angry silence.

"I hope you will forgive me for laughing. You see, I thought you were—er, someone else. And I was so surprised I could not help laughing. Tell me whether you are hurt. Let me help you."

"Well, the least you can do is to help me home," she said gruffly. "I'm all shook up."

She evidently blamed him for her fall. He raised her up, and she leaned on him, grunting and groaning. As they hobbled down the road Ralph restrained his mirth with difficulty at this contrast to his dreams—his torn and spattered coat, his yellow shoes and the woman leaning heavily on his arm.

He glanced at her from time to time, and saw that her normal color had returned and that the fall seemed to have done her very little harm.

They walked on. She said nothing. Finally he began to be unpleasantly aware of her weight. His arm seemed almost paralyzed and drops of perspiration came out on his forehead.

"Would you mind changing to the other side? I could support you with my right arm. This one is getting a little tired."

The long lips set into a grim line. "Can't," responded the woman. "My other arm's hurt too bad."

He wondered vaguely how her arm could possibly be hurt, but said nothing. The woman urged him on. They made several turns to the left, to the right, then on and on, it seemed to Ralph interminably. Her weight seemed greater each moment. He had practically carried her the whole distance.

She did not speak except to urge him to walk faster. Finally they made one last turn and came within sight of a small gray house set well back from the road in a garden of roses. Red ramblers climbed over fence and porch.

As the two drew near a young girl arose from the steps and hurried toward the gate. "Oh, are you hurt? Are you hurt?" she exclaimed breathlessly to the woman.

The latter put out her injured "arm" and opened the gate with a bang. "No! I fell down, but I wa'n't hurt a mite. Would ha' been home an hour ago only I wanted to teach some smart fool a lesson." She strode up the walk and into the house, letting the screen door slam after her.

Again the helpless fit of laughter came upon Ralph. He leaned against the gate, rubbing his numb arm and shouting with mirth. This time he had a sweet echo and looked into a rosy face dimpled with fun, for after one blank moment and a glance at the state of his attire the girl had seemed to divine all in a flash.

The young man looked down somewhat ruefully at his coat and shoes. "I seem to have received the worst of it," he said.

The girl looked up at him with a trace of shyness. "You could come in and clean up. Do not mind her; she's peculiar but—"

He broke in a with a question. "Any relation?" he asked. What if she should be the mother?

"No, oh, no! We are boarding here—my mother and I. Mrs. Thurston takes boarders every summer.

She started toward the house, and Ralph followed. Mrs. Thurston met them at the door. She led the young man to a room, supplied him with water and clean towels in grim silence.

But as she was leaving she paused. "Gimme that coat." Ralph handed it to her and she disappeared.

Presently she brought back the coat. The long rip was neatly mended. "Guess this'll do till you can see a tailor. Dinner ready in half an hour."

That dinner was a memorable event. It was a well cooked meal, served in the long bay window, where the ramblers climbed in over the sill. Mrs. Thurston lost some of her grimness and even smiled once or twice. Mrs. Farrand, the girl's mother, was very gracious.

And the girl herself? She sat by the open window, not in the blue dress he had pictured, but snowy white. In her eyes were the lights and shadows, the expressions he had seen in the eyes of the Dream Girl around the bend in the stream. His wonderful vacation had indeed begun.

Afterward he saw her alone for a moment on the porch. The glove lay in his pocket. He was afraid to ask her about it. Suppose it should not be hers.

He drew it out slowly. The light from the window shone upon it. The girl reached up and took it from his hand.

"Why, you found my glove!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"It is yours, then?"

"Yes. I'm so glad! It is not very pleasant for one not to have a mate."

"I'm finding that out, too," he murmured.

He moved a step nearer.

"Good night." He pressed the little soft hand in both his own for a moment. "I'll see you to-morrow morning," he said. "I've arranged with Mrs. Thurston to come here to board."

SO BILLY WENT

BY AGNES AGNEW.

BILLY BOY sat on the garden steps and gloomily watched Belshazzar's frantic endeavor to dig out a mole.

Time was when Billy would have seconded Belshazzar's efforts—but to-day he would scarce have turned his head to watch a circus parade. The somber black pall of utter desolation had settled over him and life, which once had seemed so fair, mocked him with its uselessness.

For Billy was in love, and his love was scorned, flaunted, derided and refused. The iron had struck deep into his soul and broken off, and the barbs still rankled.

That he had reached the epochal age of 10 before attaining the grand passion shows at least that he did not wear his heart upon his sleeve. Previously he had sauntered idly along the primrose path of dalliance, indulging in tentative flirtatons with his nurse, his kindergarten teacher and the pink-cheeked fairy with the flaxen curls who waved him generous kisses with her chubby hands from the adjoining lawn.

Once, across the intervening hedge, he had shared with her a stick of exceedingly sticky candy; at another time he had graciously allowed her to inspect the burned finger that visibly attested his patriotic observance of the glorious Fourth—inwardly elated by her gasp of feminine horror when he undid the wrappings of the injured member.

Then had intervened a period during which he viewed the advances of the gentler sex with calm disdain, merging at times on distinct disfavor—as, for instance, when effusive visitors of uncertain age, alluding to him as the "little dear," drew him, inwardly raging against his fate within their detested embrace and kissed his freckled face.

On the evening of his tenth birthday he had had a party—such a party!—with oceans of pink lemonade and continents of angel cake, mountain ranges of ice cream, isthmuses of lady-fingers, the islands of cookies, principalities of pound cake and kingdoms of candy sufficient to allure the gloating gaze of the expectant guests and cause a legion of little "tummies" to ache in concert.

At the party she appeared pink-cheeked, adorably dimpled, demure, looking for all the world as though she might have wandered, just awakened, from some huge gilt frame in the picture gallery—the type of little girl that one instinctively longs to pinch to convince one's self of her reality; also she lisped enchantingly, and at her advent Bill beheld his preconceived ideas of femininity take instant flight.

"But you must dance with the other litle girls, also," protested his mother, gently guiding his reluctant steps where duty pointed, "and I'm afraid Bessie's mamma would not like to have her eat more than four dishes office cream in one evening.

Bessie—divine name!

After a month's devotion on his part, Bessie had passed him on the avenue that forenoon, seated in the donkey cart of the snub-nosed boy across the street, haughtily unconscious of his existence, while he of the snub nose had grinned at him offensively as they passed.

True, Billy had sauntered casually across the street later in the day and gravely pummeled the snub-nosed one in the seclusion of the coach house till he howled for mercy, but this consummation of righteous vengeance was at best vicarious punishment for the fickle Bessie.

So now, when Belshazzar cocked an inquiring ear in his direction and whined eagerly, Billy gloomily disdained his invitation to assist in excavating the mole, and with hands thrust deeply in his pockets viewed life darkly through disillusioned eyes.

Appeared presently around the corner of the house Billy's big uncle Jack, likewise engulfed in gloom, with hands in pockets and unlighted pipe despondently aslant, who seated himself beside Billy upon the steps and watched Belshazzar's efforts dejectedly.

An Uncle Jack unsociable, untalkative and downcast of mien was no distinctively new to Billy's experience that he viewed the phenomenon with wonderment. Could it be possible that the barbed shafts of jealousy had likewise entered his soul? With chin in hand, Billy pondered upon the problem in silence.

Ah! he had it. The cause of Uncle Jack's woe was plain to him. Around the fickle, the inconstant Bessie revolved an attendant satellite yclept Aunt Agatha, after whom Billy had lately observed his Uncle Jack dangling quite disgracefully, though why Billy could not understand, for certainly she was not pretty—that is, from Billy's standpoint—lacking the adorable Bessie's pink cheeks and infantile plumpness, likewise her bewitching lisp.

Then, too, she blushed if spoken to suddenly, which Billy regarded as a foolish habit; and once in the early stages of her acquaintance when he had shown her a little green snake no longer than that, she had shuddered with horror and begged him to take the horrid thing away, whereupon he had stuffed the offending reptile back into his pocket, together with his handkerchief, three china marbles, and stalked disdainfully away.

Still, if Uncle Jack liked that sort of a girl—all right. There was no accounting for tastes.

Belshazzar, despairing at last of capturing the mole, cocked an ear inquiringly at each of his audience in turn, and, neither offering further diversement, curled himself up comfortably between Billy's feet and went to sleep.

Billy cogitated further. Uncle Jack had opely evinced a pronounced fondness for the society of Bessie's aunt, and now when by all precedent he should have been playing golf with her, he was sitting on the garden steps, staring gloomily at nothing.

"I'D PUNCH HIM," REFLECTED BILLY ALOUD.

For this state of affairs there could be but one plausible explanation. Bessie's aunt had deceived Uncle Jack even as Bessie had deceived him. Girls were all alike.

Then suddenly he remembered having seen her whizzing down the avenue earlier in the day in Mr. Stanhope's auto with Mr. Stanhope at the steering wheel. That luckless individual had once patronizingly addressed him as "my little man" and Billy detested him accordingly.

"I'd punch him," reflected Billy aloud, vindictively.

"Who—what?" asked Uncle Jack, startled.

"Mr. Stanhope," explained Billy. "I saw Bessie's aunt out riding with him in his auto."

Uncle Jack stared. Then he laughed.

"Well, you are an observant, little beggar," he conceded admiringly.

"Though that isn't the root of the difficulty, Billy, boy. Mr. Stanhope is merely an accessory after the fact—non particeps, criminis, as it were."

This being too deep for Billy's comprehension, he ignored it and opened up a new line of investigation. "What is the matter, then?" he demanded calmly.

"We quarreled," confessed Uncle Jack.

"What about?" Billy's inquisitorial turn of mind was recognized and feared on occasion by all the family.

Uncle Jack shrugged his shoulders. "You can search me," he answered expressively. "I don't know what about. The fact remains that we did quarrel, and now she won't speak to me, so I can't tell her I'm sorry and ask her to make up."

"Are you sorry?" demanded Billy.

"O, yes, I'm sorry all right," admitted Uncle Jack with a rueful laugh. "However, that doesn't mend matters any, so don't bother your curly head about it, Billy boy. You'll have troubles of your own some day."

Billy thought of the inconstant Bessie and wisely remained silent.

Belshazzar, waking, stretched himself lazily and wandered out of sight around the corner of the house. Billy, absorbed in thought followed. If Uncle Jack really wanted to make up, surely Bessie's aunt ought to be informed of the fact.

"I'll go tell her," decided Billy sagely.

Behold then presently Billy trudging sturdily up the street with Belshazzar tagging happily at his heels. When he had turned the first corner he spied Bessie's aunt, book in hand, comfortably ensconced in a hammock in the shelter of a tiny summer house. Making their way directly across the lawn, Billy and Belshazzar appeared before her with disconcerting suddenness.

"Well, how do you do, Billy boy?" said Bessie's aunt, a little uncertainly. It was hard to presage what a visit from Billy might portend.

"How do you do?" responded Billy with owl-like gravity; then wrinkling his forehead thoughtfully, he regarded her with unwinking gaze for an appreciable space of time.

"I don't think you're pretty," he stated at last judicially.

Bessie's aunt laughed deliciously.

"To tell you the truth, Billy," she admitted confidentially, "I don't think so either."

"But I guess my uncle Jack does," continued Billy, wanting Bessie's aunt forgot to laugh and blushed instead. "And he don't know what you and him quarreled about," went on Billy gravely, "but he's sorry anyway, and it wasn't about Mr. Stanhope, because he says Mr. Stanhope is a non—non—something that I forget, but if I was Uncle Jack I'd punch him," said Billy, doubling up his fists belligerently. "Anyway, I think Uncle Jack is lots nicer than Mr. Stanhope," he added.

"So do I," admitted Bessie's aunt after thoughtful consideration. "And did you say he was sorry," she asked.

Billy nodded emphatically.

"Well—if he's sorry—" Bessie's aunt was visibly impressed.

"Why—there's Uncle Jack now!" announced Billy, pointing an accusing finger. "Uncle Jack! Uncle Jack!" he called shrilly.

Uncle Jack turned his head, but it was not at Billy that he looked. It must have read forgiveness in the glance of Bessie's aunt, and a moment later he was crossing the lawn.

"I'm afraid my small nephew has been disturbing you," he apologized, picking up the book that Bessie's aunt had conveniently dropped, and carefully restoring it to her.

"Not in the least," smiled Bessie's aunt. "We've been exchanging confidences on—O, lots of personal matters." She hunted diligently for the place she had lost when she dropped the book. "He says you are sorry."

"I am abjectly repentant," he assured her, gravely.

Appeared, Bessie, pink-cheeked adorably dimpled, demure. At sight of Billy she chewed reflectively on one chubby finger and smiled at him ingenously.

"Leth go thee my white wabbits, Billy," she cooed alluringly.

Billy went.

TOO LATE

BY WILL SEAT.

HE was always sitting there when Serene went by, leaning back in the wicker hour-glass chair. Sometimes a book or magazine lay open in her lap, but more often it had slipped unheeded to the floor.

Serene's first impression of her was that she was the loveliest woman she had ever seen; her next that she was the weariest-looking. Every line of her long, slim figure and the loose knot of her clasped hands indicated supreme inertia and indifference.

Her eyes appeared always to be staring at nothing and her mouth fell at the corners in a little, sad, despairing droop that seemed meaningful of some serious soul disorder. She was always tastefully dressed.

Serene was very young. It was not in the central telephone office where she worked and the hours were long and the pay meagre. Serene had worked there since she left school.

She lived with an old aunt who did dressmaking and had always acted the part of mother to her. Their home-making was carried on in four small upstairs rooms, more comfortable in winter than in summer.

Serene loved pretty things as much as any girl could, but she did not have many. And when she saw the lady in the hour-glass chair dressed like a princess it made her angry to see so much idleness and luxury while her own poor little head was a confusion of bells and numbers and the voices of impatient persons.

No one whom Serene knew could tell her anything about the lady. She had come and there she was. That was all.

One Sunday afternoon when Serene went by she had Dave with her. Dave had been devoted to Serene all through her school days and since. He was a big, gentle fellow, all ambition and vim and sound purpose, who meant when he learned his trade to make a little home for Serene.

Serene suspected this intention, though he had not mentioned it to her yet. She was very proud of him and she cared a great deal for him in her girlish way.

She wore a little ring with a red stone which he had given her. It was the only pretty bit of jewelry she had. She was so happy that she forgot to feel angry toward the veranda lady for just sitting there in her good clothes.

Serene had on her best frock; it was white and becoming. She was going out on the river in Dave's new boat which he had made and painted himself, just to give her pleasure. It was a beautiful day and the joy of it lingered with Serene during the week.

Before another Sunday arrived a new girl came into the office. She was a showy, handsome girl, who always had an answer or a pert little laugh ready. Serene shrank from association with her and the girl perceived it.

Consequently when Dave came that Saturday afternoon to wait for Serene and to accompany her home, having finished his day's work before she had finished hers, the new girl tried to discomfit Serene by flirting with him. She asked him to read the numbers while she "plugged" at her switchboard, and Dave, unconscious of any wrong-doing complied.

Serene was angry and went home alone as fast as her feet would carry her, a very much disturbed little girl. Next day when Dave called her up she gave him over the 'phone a spirited reply and hung up the receiver. When he came to call she would not see him.

Dave wrote to her and she would not answer, and she would not speak to him when she met him. If he wanted to go with that horrid Ethel Slater he could. She would have nothing more to do with him.

She was so miserable that on a certain afternoon when rain menaced she walked to work without her umbrella. There was none at the office she could borrow, so she had to walk back through the drizzle, which suddenly became a downpour, just as she reached the veranda lady's house.

She had started to run in dismay at getting drenched, when a voice called coolly, commandingly: "Come here, I want to see you."

The veranda lady had come to

DAVE.

life and had spoken. Serene ran with all her might to the proffered shelter and sank into a chair. The veranda lady picked up an afghan and tossed it over her shoulders.

"So that you won't get cold," she said. "You are damp."

They sat a moment watching the rain.

"I have seen you go by every day since I have been here," said the veranda lady in her slow, sweet, tired way. "I'm glad this rain came so that we could get acquainted. You see," she smiled faintly. "I'm just beginning to realize that it's lonely sitting here day in and day out alone. I've been ill, I've had a great sorrow." The veranda lady's voice fell.

"At first I couldn't realize anything but that. By and by, perhaps, I shall forget it a little. Until then I can only count off the days. They're such long days." She sighed. "I wish I had the strength to work. You work, don't you?"

Serene told her how and where she worked. And she told a great deal more than her words conveyed, for the lady was reading the meaning of her wan little face and miserable eyes.

"I envy you," Serene ended, in a little outburst of confidence.

"O, don't!" said the veranda lady, almost sharply. "I'm not to be envied. Let me tell you, dear, it's very nice to be young, with all your dreams undreamed and your future in one beautiful big piece. When you get my age you've mostly only memories and some regrets. And a whole lot of your future is used up to make a past out of. O, I know!

"Some day you'll be marrying a nice young fellow I saw you going by with one Sunday. You did look so radiant. It cheered me to see you. For you see, dear, I've learned that the next best thing to being happy oneself is to see somebody else happy."

"But I'm not happy," blurted out Serene. "I'm—" And then she told the veranda lady the whole story.

"O my dear!" said the older woman. And she put up her white hand and brushed back her hair. There was gray in her hair. Serene saw. And on her finger was a great red stone like a bit of fire. An engagement ring.

"O, my dear! You were jealous—jealous! Of that dear boy! You see, I can tell he is a dear boy. And you are a dear little girl. But you will wreck your life if you aren't careful. It's very lucky for you that you can still make up. And when you have made up stay so. Else—"

Splashing through the rain, laden with raincoat and umbrella came a tall young figure. It was Dave and he was coming straight from her house. Serene knew, looking for her. She caught her breath.

"Why, there he is now!" said the veranda lary cheerfully. "Coming to bring you an umbrella. The dear boy! Call to him—call to him, quick!"

Serene called. And Dave heard. His face was very bright as he came to the veranda, and though the lady in the hourglass chair was wonderful to see, he had eyes only for Serene, whom he helped very proudly into the raincoat. A very contrite, humble little Serene she was, too.

"You must come and see me together some evening," said the veranda lady, as they were going away. "I want to know you both better. I'll make you something nice in the chafing dish and sing for you some songs I know you'll like."

"O, we'll come," cried Serene. "And thank you a million times!"

Next day as Serene was passing she ran up to the veranda railing to speak to her new friend.

"We've made up," she said, radiantly. "And I'm never going to be a bit jealous of him again as long as I live. He didn't care for that Ethel Slater. I should have known. It was horried of me not to trust him. And you did it all, you dear, sweet, beautiful thing, you!" She picked up lady's hand and kissed it.

There were tears in the veranda lady's eyes. She smiled, but so sadly that Serene felt she would rather have seen her cry.

"I'm so glad you made up," she said. "We didn't, you see—he and I. I was jealous, too. And when I came to my senses it was too late—" She looked away.

"He had got over caring?" breathed Serene, tragically.

"O, no!" The veranda lady caught her breath. "He just died," she whispered, miserably.